

RAMSEY TOWN COMMISSIONERS

[PUBLIC]

A Special Meeting of the Ramsey Town Commissioners was held in the Board Room, Ramsey Town Hall, Ramsey on Wednesday 27th January, 2021, at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Mr. A. G. Cowie, and Mrs. J. Wedgwood, Messrs' Rev Canon N. D. Greenwood, N. Howard, J. McGuinness, L. Parker and W. G. Young.

Apologies: Apologies for absence had been received from Messrs. A. J. Oldham and F. B. R. Williams.

The Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, and Finance Officer were in attendance.

Mrs. Quayle attended by telephone conference call; it was noted that Mrs. Quayle would not be able to vote on any resolution due to her not attending at the place of the meeting.

The meeting was conducted in accordance with statutory controls in place and with suitable precautions, a specific risk assessment had been undertaken and circulated to Members and staff in advance.

(2020/21:265) Budget 2021/22 Rate Setting Continued

The Chairman welcomed Members and staff noting that with seven Members in attendance the meeting was quorate.

Mr. McGuinness was invited to lead the discussion on rate setting.

Further Projects – Mr. McGuinness drew attention to a list of further projects previously circulated for consideration.

Vollan Estate Road - £20,000 for resurfacing. Mr. Parker expressed the opinion that this was not an immediate priority.

Mr. McGuinness proposed that the project be deferred for one year. Mrs. Wedgwood and Mr. Young felt that the areas at the park entrance needed addressing as it was quite badly broken up and well used by pedestrians. After further discussion Mr. Young seconded Mr. McGuinness's proposal to defer for one year.

Resolved: by 4 votes to 3 to defer the project, Mrs. Wedgwood and Messrs, Cowie and Howard voting against.

Replacement Power Jet Washer – Members noted a report that the current unit is 18 years old and currently out of action. The unit is used for deep cleaning of streets, lanes etc., and play areas.

Resolved Proposed by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Cowie and agreed unanimously to provide a budget of £5,000 for replacement.



(2020/21:265) Budget 2021/22 Rate Setting Continued

Street Names and Flags – Members questioned the price per flag, and the extent of street signage replacement that was necessary. Members felt a more detailed report and business case was needed.

Resolved: Proposed by Mr. McGuinness, seconded by Mr. Parker and agreed unanimously to defer and use the existing budgets for ad hoc replacements.

Mr. McGuinness proposed that the remaining schemes be deferred for future consideration and preparation of business cases. Mr. Cowie seconded the motion which was agreed unanimously.

Mr. McGuinness asked whether any Members had any second thoughts on prior discussions before considering the position and rate setting.

Mrs. Wedgwood asked whether underspending in the current year could be carried forward to 2021/22 budgets. The Town Clerk explained that projected expenditure for the current year forms part of the budget process and effectively re-sets the budget for the remainder of the year, any underspend is used to meet the next year's income requirements.

Mrs. Wedgwood asked if the question of additional funds for the head gardener's 3-year landscaping plan might be provided. The original bid was for £6,000 over 3 years - £1,500 for cycleway planting in 2021/22 and £1,500 for a first-year planting scheme followed by 2 further years of £1,000 for additional landscaping, and £1000 to replace gates and planters.

Mr. McGuinness drew attention to his previous suggestion that the extent of intensive planter use around town be reduced and resources concentrated on the major attractions and not spread too thin.

Resolved: Proposed by Mrs. Wedgwood proposed, seconded by Mr. Howard and agreed by 4 votes to 3 to allow an additional budget of £1,500 for 2021/2, Messrs' Cowie, McGuinness and Parker voting against.

Mr. Cowie asked whether works were planned at Station Road Car Park. Members noted that the Commission is awaiting confirmation of agreement with other parties and agreed that it was prudent not to assume any income until such was confirmed.

Members noted that the Lighting scheme was based on net expenditure of £6,000 after receipt of grant and would not proceed without such.

No other matters were raised.

Mr. McGuinness referred Members to the schedule of rates collected and the projected approximate collection shortfall this year. Mr. McGuinness pointed out that applying no rate increase would result in a £177,000 shortfall from limited reserves, as referenced by Town Clerk the Commission needs to have regard to cash flow and ensure liquidity.



(2020/21:265) Budget 2021/22 Rate Setting Continued

Mr. McGuinness reminded Members of the previous view that a small and often increase is important to ensure reserves are held and avoid larger rate increases.

Mr. McGuinness advised that to meet 2021/22 expenditure without reducing reserves would probably require a rate of 435p. He advised that it is unknown at present whether the level of collection will be better than projected.

Mr. McGuinness proposed that the Town Rate for 2021/22 be set at 419p in the £, this would represent an increase of approximately 2%. Mr. Cowie seconded the motion stating that he saw this as a sensible move recognising the increases in waste disposal and Civic Amenity Site operating costs and the need to maintain reserves.

Mr. Parker moved an amendment that the Town Rate be set at 415p in the £, an increase of 1% which he felt recognising the hardship experienced by the town over the past year. The amendment was seconded by Mr. Young. 

Mrs. Quayle indicated her support for a rate 419p in £ as she felt there remains a growing number of areas where expenditure and investment needed.

Resolved: The Chairman put the amendment proposed by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Young, that the town rate for 2021/22 rate year be set at 415p in the £, to the vote. The amendment was approved by 4 votes to 3, Messrs Cowie, Howard and McGuinness voting against.

The Chairman asked that Members consider the decision as private until such time as a formal media release was agreed and issued. The Town Clerk was requested to convey the decision to the Town's Members of the House of Keys.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7:50 p.m. giving a time for attendance of 1 hour.



Chairman